

Transcript

[return to index](#)

Peace Is at Hand (1968-1973)

9 of 11

RICHARD NIXON, April 1964: *The first issue is what the goal of the United States should be. I believe that the goal can be nothing less than victory.*

RICHARD NIXON, February 1965: *What is involved here is, in effect, to let the Red Chinese know in Vietnam as we, in effect, let Khrushchev know in the confrontation in Cuba that the United States will not stand by and allow any power, however great, take over another country by aggression.*

RICHARD NIXON, May 1966: *A retreat by the United States from Vietnam would be a Communist victory, a victory of massive proportions and would lead to World War III.*

NARRATOR: By early 1968, America had dropped almost three million tons of bombs on Vietnam -- twice the tonnage dropped on Germany and Japan in World War II.

America was trying to stop North Vietnam from sending soldiers and supplies to the South, trying to force the Communist leaders in Hanoi to give up their long-held goal of a unified Vietnam.

After the impact of the 1968 Communist Tet offensive, President Johnson ordered a bombing cutback and peace talks began.

JOHN NEGROPONTE (delegate to Paris Peace Talks): We all went and stayed in hotel rooms rather than renting apartments or finding other kinds of long-term accommodation. It didn't occur to any of us at the time that five or six years later there would still be a delegation in Paris still going over very much of the same ground. So, I would say that when we first arrived there was an atmosphere of heightened expectation, of early progress.

NARRATOR: The Americans brought in South Vietnamese government officials. The North Vietnamese brought in the National Liberation Front, the Vietcong, the Communist-led movement in the South.

JOHN NEGROPONTE: The negotiations, one could say, were very stereotyped and were not negotiations in the classic sense of the word. There wasn't the kind of give and take that you would have in a labor negotiation or a business negotiation in the United States, or for that matter even in a more normal international negotiation between governments. They tended both in public and even in private, I should say, to follow a very set pattern. One side or the other would make a prepared statement and then the other side would reply with a prepared statement and then we might adjourn for a break and have tea and some refreshments, and then there would be a little bit of give and take.

NARRATOR: As the diplomats haggled over the political implications of the seating arrangements, President Johnson prepared to leave office.

PRESIDENT LYNDON B. JOHNSON (Press Conference, October 24, 1968): *We want peace very much. We've been doing all we could for several months to try to bring about some kind of an understanding that would result in substantive discussions and ultimate settlement of the Southeast Asia problem.*

NARRATOR: A few days before the American presidential elections, Johnson halted all bombing of North Vietnam.

NIXON CAMPAIGN COMMERCIAL, November 1968: **RICHARD NIXON**: *Never has so much power been used so ineffectively as in Vietnam. If after all of this time, and all of this sacrifice and all of this support there is still no end in sight, then I say the time has come for the American people to turn to new leadership, not tied to the policies and mistakes of the past. I pledge to you we shall have an honorable end to the war in Vietnam.*

COMMERCIAL NARRATOR: *This time vote like your whole world depended on it.*

NARRATOR: By a narrow margin Nixon won.

The 1968 Tet offensive had hit South Vietnam's cities and towns, but now the main fighting had shifted back to the countryside. More than half a million American soldiers were still in Vietnam.

Four years since American combat troops had landed in Vietnam. The densely populated Mekong Delta was still far from pacified.

During the first six months of 1969, an average of more than 800 Americans were wounded each week. Each week more than 200 Americans were killed. Each week more than 450 of their South Vietnamese allies died alongside them. Each day more than 500 North Vietnamese and Vietcong were counted dead.

NARRATOR: In July 1969, President Nixon had good news for the troops. They could soon go home, and leave the fighting to the South Vietnamese. He called the policy "Vietnamization."

MELVIN LAIRD (Secretary of Defense): The policy of Vietnamization was to turn over the responsibility for the ground combat and air combat to the South Vietnamese. It was a policy of giving them the equipment and the training so that they could follow up their responsibility to their country. You cannot guarantee the will and the desire of any country, but you can give them the tools to do the job.

NARRATOR: The Saigon administration faced a new political challenge -- the Vietcong pro-claimed themselves the Provisional Revolutionary Government. America was still committed to troop withdrawals.

HENRY KISSINGER (National Security Adviser): We made up our minds from the beginning that we were going to try to disengage from Vietnam. And, all of the debate afterwards were really about, with the moderate critics, were about rates of disengagement, not about the fact of disengagement. So it had to be a high priority.

MELVIN LAIRD: The pressures were on as far as the American people were concerned. The pressures were on as far as the Congress was concerned and, if we wouldn't have moved in the direction of Vietnamization, our whole military force structure would have been destroyed in the United States and we would not have been able to meet the NATO commitments and the other commitments which were treaty commitments that had been made but, had been made by the American government.

MORTON HALPERIN (National Security Council staff): The major preoccupation of Kissinger and Nixon was U.S./Soviet relations. They believed that world peace depended on getting the Soviet Union into a relationship with the United States so that it ceased to do things which threatened American security interests. And, it was in this context that they approached every issue from the Middle East to China to Vietnam.

Vietnam was important because the United States had made it important. Kissinger was always fond of saying that we inherited 500,000 troops in Vietnam. We didn't put them there.

COMING HOME SOLDIERS, July 1969: *"Home, I'm coming home, coming home, from across the sea."*

NARRATOR: For the cameras, U.S. troops celebrated their departure.

SOLDIERS: *"Home, I'm coming home, no more marching and fighting for me. I am a soldier, a coming home soldier, no purple heart do I wear on my chest. I am a soldier, a coming home soldier, I know that I, I've done my best -- I'm coming home, I'm coming, I'm coming home, I'm coming h-o-m-e."*

NARRATOR: As the American troops left, Nixon stepped up air and artillery attacks.

NARRATOR: Hundreds of miles of tunnels were dug to shelter factories and homes. The songs and poetry of Ho Chi Minh promised victory and independence. The Americans and the American-sponsored government in the South would be defeated. Korean, Australian, Thai and other troops would be driven out. "We will rebuild our land ten times more beautiful," claimed Ho Chi Minh.

TUU KY (Ho Chi Minh's secretary): He was really very ill by the end of 1968. It was very difficult for him to move about. And yet Comrade Ho Chi Minh patiently continued his exercise and his walks. Early in 1969 he

was still visiting the villages but his health deteriorated after that, although he still continued to work.

NARRATOR: Ho Chi Minh died on September 3, 1969.

TUU KY: He said that he was only going to visit Lenin and his other predecessors. And by the word "predecessors" he could have meant that he was going to visit past Vietnamese leaders.

NARRATOR: Vietnam's Communist Party leader, Le Duan, delivered the eulogy.

PREMIER PHAM VAN DONG: This was so painful to the nation and to me personally that I cannot find the words to describe it. But to us, it was not just a painful event. We also faced the problem -- how to continue his work, how to accomplish all the things he wanted us to achieve.

NARRATOR: American troops, some just returned from Vietnam, were deployed to Washington -- to protect the capital against anti-war demonstrators.

ANTI-WAR DEMONSTRATION, November 1969: *Peace now, Peace now!*

NARRATOR: Nixon and his aides, claiming that anti-war critics were helping the Communists, ordered illegal wire taps and drew up a list of their domestic "enemies".

SONG PROTEST: "All we are saying is give peace a chance" -- Are you listening Nixon? "All we are saying is give peace a chance" -- Are you listening Agnew?"

NARRATOR: In a single Washington demonstration, a quarter of a million Americans denounced the war.

SONG PROTEST: Are you listening in the Pentagon? "All we are saying..." -- Are you listening Nixon?"

NARRATOR: Hanoi radio publicized the protests.

ROBINSON RISNER (POW, 1965-1973): If 200 people marched on Washington, they made it 200,000. We learned how to deal with the numbers. Of course, every protest, every anti-war speech made by a person such as McGovern, Jane Fonda, Galbraith, all of those only encouraged the Vietnamese, prolonged the war, worsened our condition and cost the lives of more Americans on the battlefield.

ADMIRAL THOMAS MOORER (Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff): So many people in and out of the government, and certainly I would put the media at the top of the list, seem far more concerned about the lives of the people in Southeast Asia than they were the lives of the young men that were fighting for their country. Let me give you an example of this: For instance, when I was describing the torture that was being inflicted on the POWs in North Vietnam, I've actually had the American citizens tell me, "Well it serves them right -- they had no business volunteering."

NARRATOR: Defense Secretary Laird was ahead of the timetable for U.S. troop withdrawal. By April 1970, he had reduced the forces in Vietnam by more than 100,000. Nixon had resumed full scale bombing of the North. American generals had asked Laird to endorse a major offensive against Communist sanctuaries in Cambodia. They said it was vital to a continued U.S. force reduction. Laird opposed the use of U.S. ground troops. Nixon made the decision.

PRESIDENT NIXON (television address, April 1970): *I have concluded that the time has come for action. Tonight American and South Vietnamese units will attack the headquarters for the entire Communist military operation in South Vietnam. This key control center has been occupied by the North Vietnamese and Vietcong for five years in blatant violation of Cambodia's neutrality. This is not an invasion of Cambodia.*

NARRATOR: The control center was never found. The action further divided America.

BILLY GRAHAM (University of Tennessee, May 1970): *All Americans may not agree with the decision a president makes, but he is our president.*

NARRATOR: Evangelist Billy Graham, an old friend and supporter, who once told Nixon: "It is your destiny to be president."

BILLY GRAHAM: Mr. President, we welcome you and Mrs. Nixon. We honor you as our President (applause) and we pray for you that God will continue to give you the wisdom, the courage and the faith as you bear the heavy responsibilities of your office.

NARRATOR: Three weeks earlier, four students had been shot dead by National Guardsmen during demonstrations at Kent State University in Ohio. Campus protests reached a peak. Polls showed that a majority of Americans supported administration policy. But opponents continued their protests, harassing Nixon wherever they could.

DEMONSTRATION CHANT (University of Tennessee, May 1970): *One, two, three, four, we don't want your fucking war...*

PRESIDENT NIXON (University of Tennessee, May 1970): *If we're going to bring people together as we must bring them together, if we're going to have peace in the world, if our young people are going to have a fulfillment beyond simply those material things, they must turn to those great spiritual sources that have made America the great country that it is. I'm proud to be here and I'm very proud to have your warm reception.*

COMMUNITY SINGING (University of Tennessee, May 1970): *"God bless America, land that I love, stand beside her, and guide her, through the night with the light from above. From the mountains, to the prairies, to the oceans white with foam, God bless America, my home sweet home."*

ANNOUNCER: *This is NBC News.*

PRESIDENT NIXON, October 1970: *I propose that all armed forces throughout Indochina cease firing their weapons and remain in the positions they now hold. This would be a cease-fire in place. I do not minimize the difficulty of maintaining a cease-fire in a guerrilla war where there are no front lines. But an unconventional war may require an unconventional truce. Our side is ready to stand still and cease firing.*

NARRATOR: By implication, a cease-fire in place would leave North Vietnamese troops in the South. Hanoi's leaders did not respond.

In Washington, impatient senators urged ending the war in nine months - in exchange for the release of U.S. prisoners of war.

SEN. EDWARD KENNEDY, June 1971: *The only possible excuse for the continuing discredited policy of Vietnamization, the war, now and in the months ahead seems to be the President's intention to play his last great card for peace at a time closer to November 1972.*

SEN. BIRCH BAYH, June 1971: *I cannot, I cannot believe and I do not believe that most of our countrymen believe, that a plan for peace necessitates bombing four countries, invading two, in order to get out of one.*

SEN. MIKE MANSFIELD, June 1971: *There are many who today are disenchanted with the conflict. There were very few at the outset, either Republicans or Democrats, who opposed the ever deepening involvement; indeed, who did not support or acquiesce in it.*

NARRATOR: Anti-war sentiments grew among academics and opinion leaders. *The New York Times* published the stolen Pentagon Papers, a secret history of official war decisions.

MIKE MANSFIELD, June 1971: *We went into Vietnam on the wheels of the same policy and for many of the same reasons that we had gone into Korea a decade and a half earlier. We did so, however, almost as an habituated response with far less understanding of the actual situation in Indochina, unmindful of the changes in this nation, in Asia and in the world.*

Vietnam was a mistake, a tragic mistake. To persist in it now is to add outrage to the sacrifices of those who have suffered and who have died in this conflict. To persist in it now is to do violence to the welfare of the nation.

NARRATOR: Nixon's envoys were a familiar sight on Saigon's boulevards. But behind the diplomatic rituals, Henry Kissinger concealed from South Vietnam that he had been secretly meeting with the Communists since August 1969. Even top U.S. officials had been kept in the dark.

WILLIAM SULLIVAN (Deputy Assistant Secretary of State): My first inkling of the secret talks came from conversations that I had quite regularly on the secure telephone circuit with Phil Habib who was the head of our, or the acting head of our delegation in Paris that was meeting with the Vietnamese. He and I comparing notes on various things that were occurring, came to the conclusion that there must be some secret talks taking place elsewhere. Our conclusion, just from the way in which things were evolving at that time, was that they were being carried on by Henry Kissinger.

NARRATOR: The adversary in the secret talks was Le Duc Tho, a member of North Vietnam's ruling Politbureau.

HENRY KISSINGER: Le Duc Tho had a tendency to make the same speech every day, months on end, and it was sort of like a prayer session at the beginning of a meeting, and it meant, what it symbolized, was that they had all kinds of time, that we were going to have to collapse long before they would even think of yielding.

NARRATOR: From Peking, a television spectacular -- a diplomatic bombshell: Richard Nixon, honored guest of the nation he once accused of fomenting aggression in Vietnam. With Mao Zedong, the Communist leader he once reviled.

Relations between China and the Soviet Union were in shreds. But both gave aid to North Vietnam. Could Nixon widen the rift to America's advantage?

Before China's revolution, China and Vietnam had been traditional enemies. Could China be induced to abandon the North Vietnamese?

PRESIDENT NIXON, February 27, 1972: *Mr. Prime Minister, our two peoples tonight hold the future of the world in our hands. And as we think of that future, we are dedicated to the principle that we can build a new world.*

NARRATOR: Nixon offered the Chinese trade, recognition, a counterweight to the Russians. China's isolation was coming to an end.

PRESIDENT NIXON: *We have been here a week...this was the week that changed the world.*

NARRATOR: On March 31, 1972, the North Vietnamese launched a new and ambitious offensive. Deploying tanks and large troop units, they poured directly across the 17th parallel into South Vietnam.

Refugees and South Vietnamese troops fled before them. By April 2, the Communists had conquered half of Quangtri province. By May 1, they had taken it all.

HENRY KISSINGER: After the North Vietnamese had taken Quangtri we had a meeting in May 1972, which we had negotiated to arrange for months. When I arrived there all he did was read newspaper accounts to me. When I said I didn't have to come thousands of miles and negotiate for five months for a meeting to hear newspaper accounts, he said, "If they're true, what difference does it make?"

NARRATOR: The South Vietnamese Army was in disarray. In Washington, President Nixon searched for a response that would not require American combat troops.

ADMIRAL THOMAS MOORER (Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff): I was called by the President and he questioned me about the prospects of mining Haiphong harbor. And...which I told him we were already ready, all ready for that, as a matter of fact, by the first time I had recommended it, and I personally made the plan myself when I was commander-in-chief of the Pacific Fleet eight years before. So there was no planning necessary. We already had the plan. And consequently his next requirement was to ask me can we do this without it leaking? Because I would like to be on the -- announcing it to the nation on T.V. at the same instant that the bombs were falling.

NARRATOR: Nixon mined Haiphong harbor and stepped up the bombing. Nearly a thousand U.S. aircraft pounded North and South Vietnam. The North Vietnamese offensive was blunted.

HENRY KISSINGER: Then we resumed negotiations. Le Duc Tho was much easier to deal with and made many more concessions after that

than he had made in the years before that.

NARRATOR: Twelve days after the mining and the bombing, President Nixon was received in Moscow.

HENRY KISSINGER: Brezhnev's reaction to the bombing of Hanoi and the mining of Haiphong was very tough in rhetoric and really inconsequential in action. He made many tough statements but he never did anything. The fact that the Soviets received us after the intensification of the war on North Vietnam must have contributed to the sense of isolation and beleaguerment of Hanoi.

NARRATOR: The Nixon-Kissinger global strategy was intact. The United States and the Soviet Union signed a strategic arms control treaty.

Nixon faced re-election. The war in Vietnam dragged on. The North Vietnamese clung to a key demand that the Thieu government in Saigon must be dissolved. Then, after more than four years of fighting and talking, a breakthrough.

NGUYEN CO THACH (North Vietnamese delegate): On 8 October, 1972, Le Duc Tho have make a proposal. In this proposal we have dropped the demand for the dissolution of the Thieu government and we propose to have the two governments in South Vietnam coexist.

HENRY KISSINGER: They dropped the demand that Thieu had to resign on October 8, I believe it was. At any rate, whenever they put forward their comprehensive proposal. And that, as far as we were concerned, was the breakthrough.

JOHN NEGROPONTE (Delegate to Paris Peace Talks): I think that the principal element that we brought to it was that we were prepared to settle for a cease-fire in place, and the return of our prisoners of war in exchange for the removal of our military forces.

NIXON AT MIA MEETING, October 16, 1972: *As you recall...(clapping)*

NARRATOR: Peace seemed near. Nixon turned against his critics.

RICHARD NIXON AT MIA MEETING, October 16, 1972: *As you recall, I made the decision to mine the harbors, to bomb military targets in North Vietnam. That decision was the right decision. Those who predicted that it would lead to the dissolution of the summit -- the leaders of the media, the great editors, and publishers and television commentators and the rest -- proved to be wrong. When that decision was made there was precious little support from any of the so-called opinion leaders of this country that I have just described. But what was the most heartwarming thing to me was that those who had so much at stake, those who had suffered so much, the great majority of those whose husbands and loved ones are now POWs or MIAs stood by that decision and I thank you very much for that support.*

NARRATOR: Nixon sent his diplomats to Saigon with a text of the secret agreement.

HOANG DUC NHA (aide to President Thieu): We say, fine, you know, thank you, could, could we see the text? And, we want to have time to study the text. Of course, they gave us the text in English, and at that time I thought I say, if our opposition knew that, that right this moment we were discussing the fate of a country in a text in English, boy, you know, it would be so bad that we shouldn't even think about it! So I ask, I say, where is the Vietnamese text? Oh, we forgot, and I say, what do you mean, you forgot? The other side, I know they don't present a text to you in English. You know between Vietnamese, we know each other, you know, there is something called national pride, and you present your own language. They say, oh this is good translation, and we have our own translators, I don't know what the name, what is the name of the guy he gave; I say, you mean to tell me an American is, you know, understand Vietnamese better than Vietnamese? We want to see the Vietnamese text.

JOHN NEGROPONTE: The atmosphere in Saigon when we brought to Saigon the draft of the treaty that we had negotiated with the North Vietnamese was very, very tense and very unpleasant. And this I ascribed to the fact that it came pretty much as a complete surprise to the South Vietnamese. They had been briefed in very general terms in the preceding weeks and months. But no one had ever been so explicit as to show them

significant drafts of treaty language.

HOANG DUC NHA: We realized that this is a very bad document to start with; number two, it did not change in any way the Communist position, it was just worded differently. Number three, the fact that the Americans, you know, presented to us and told us it was best they could have obtained is very ominous, because, it means that the Americans are out to push us to accept that.

JOHN NEGROPONTE: They raised the issue of North Vietnamese troop withdrawal and asked why that had not been dealt with in our document.

HOANG DUC NHA: The South Vietnamese government never did accept to have the North Vietnamese army stationed in South Vietnam, nor was it resigned to the fact that there is nothing that could be done about it.

HENRY KISSINGER: All of the proposals that we made to the North Vietnamese were seen and approved by Thieu. So that was not a new proposal by us in October of '72.

HOANG DUC NHA: We say, well, you know, I'm ready for any contingency, but we're not going to sign it, so please go back to Mr. Nixon, tell him that we're very sorry we cannot cooperate on that one.

NARRATOR: Unable to persuade the South Vietnamese to sign, Kissinger returned home. The North Vietnamese, fearing that the settlement was in jeopardy, made the agreement public.

JOHN NEGROPONTE: For a moment put yourself in the North Vietnamese shoes. They had gone through this entire negotiating process, they had reached agreement with us. They had even begun giving instructions to their cadre to prepare for a cease-fire. Some of the North Vietnamese leaders might have begun to think that they had been the victims of the biggest con job in history and that we had simply led them down the garden path, and then we're going to welsh on the deal.

NARRATOR: Kissinger tried to reassure America and both Vietnams.

HENRY KISSINGER (Press Conference, October 26, 1972): *We have no complaint with the general description of events as it was given by Radio Hanoi. However, there exists...there grew up the seeds of one particular misunderstanding. The North Vietnamese negotiators made their proposal conditional on the solution of the problem by October 31.*

We did agree that we would make a major effort to conclude the negotiations by October 31. As far as Saigon is concerned, it is of course entitled to participate in the settlement of a war fought on its territory. Its people have suffered much and they will remain there after we leave. We believe that peace is at hand.

NGUYEN CO THACH (North Vietnamese delegate): I think the speech..."Peace is at hand," is first of all for the voters in the United States, to say to them that the Vietnam question is no more, there is no more Vietnam question, so they can elect Nixon as a hero of peace.

NARRATOR: As expected, Nixon won by a landslide, but faced a hostile Congress.

The negotiations resumed as Le Duc Tho returned to Paris. He faced 69 changes demanded by South Vietnam, presented by Kissinger and Alexander Haig -- among them, the demand that North Vietnamese troops leave the South.

HENRY KISSINGER: I presented Thieu's list of changes which he had whittled down already in Saigon because I felt I owed it to him to go through them, and frankly to demonstrate that most of them were unattainable.

NARRATOR: Kissinger flew to Florida to see Nixon, worried that the negotiations might collapse. He spoke of resigning. The North was again intransigent. In South Vietnam, too, the agreement was still unacceptable.

JOHN NEGROPONTE: In order to reassure Saigon, we had launched a major resupply program called Operation Enhance Plus where we provided several billion additional dollars of military equipment to the Saigon government.

If, in the Politburo in Hanoi, it had been a close decision in the first place

to enter into this agreement, perhaps after the developments of October and November they were having real second thoughts.

WILLIAM SULLIVAN: The North Vietnamese engaged in a number of dilatory tactics. One of them was the question of tying the release of prisoners of war to the release of civilians in the South, but there were others, all of which generally reneged on arrangements that they had previously made and which were significant to the text and to the integrity of the document we had negotiated.

NARRATOR: In the South Vietnamese Parliament President Thieu denounced the agreement before U.S. Ambassador Bunker.

PRESIDENT THIEU, December 1972: *Consequently, the essential basis is first, that the North Vietnamese troops should withdraw totally to North Vietnam and the internal political solution of South Vietnam should be left for the South Vietnamese people alone to decide between themselves.*

HENRY KISSINGER, December 15, 1972: *We are not continuing a war in order to give total victory to our allies. We want to give them a reasonable opportunity to participate in a political struggle, but we also will not make a settlement which is a disguised form of victory for the other side.*

HOANG DUC NHA (aide to President Thieu): After October, Kissinger refused to go back to Vietnam, so Haig came, and we were told countless times by him, by Ambassador Bunker, that we should modify our position, we should do this, we should do that -- they had obtained some changes, you know, to please us, but they couldn't get everything we wanted. We said, "Well you know there are still some substantial issues that are not resolved, and we are not going to sign it." And when we were threatened of brutal reaction, we said, "Well, we know what brutal reaction means. We accept that." At that time, it was a calculated move from our part. We said, "All right, if we were the U.S. side, they have two options: either do something drastic in South Vietnam, or bomb the North."

NARRATOR: In Paris Kissinger's talks with North Vietnam seemed to be collapsing.

WILLIAM SULLIVAN: We told them several times. We warned them that our president would resume bombing of the North. They seemed not to believe the nature of this threat. They seemed to believe that the President would be inhibited from the bombing because the electoral trend in the United States had brought in a Congress that was going to oppose bombing and because the general attitude, as demonstrated in public opinion poles in the United States, was opposed to resumption of the bombing.

NARRATOR: North Vietnam's leaders made ready for the anticipated attack. Hanoi's population, swollen with refugees from other bombed towns, had to be evacuated. By December 16, one third of the estimated population, half a million people, had left.

NARRATOR: On December 18, B-52 bombers were over Hanoi and Haiphong.

CAPTAIN MICHAEL CONNERS: For miles and miles you could see the little firecrackers like going off and it was very distinct, very obvious that those were SAMS being shot up, and as you got closer they just started going up around you. And at first you were very afraid because you wanted to move away from every one you saw, but after you calmed down and realized, sure there's a SAM and it's going up, but it's going off there and you kind of ignored it. It took a little while to get used to that.

ROBINSON RISNER (POW 1965-1973): We heard the bombs start hitting and we thought this is the first time they bombed the North in a long time. The fighters hadn't even been up for some reason. Well, then when we heard the bombs start landing half a mile short of the prison and walk right by us in a string -- we knew it had to be bombers because fighters don't carry that many bombs. And the jubilation was unbelievable. Guys jumping up and down and clapping each other on the back. People hollering and shouting and the Vietnamese guard excited and poking his gun in the door and telling us to get under our bunks. One of them looked in the door and said, "You know, they are trying to kill you." I said, "They're not trying to kill me, they're trying to kill you."

ADMIRAL THOMAS MOORER (Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff): The targets selected in the 1972 Christmas bombing consisted entirely of military targets. For instance, they would consist of warehouses, command and control stations, missile sites, ammunition storage, communications sites, things of that kind. The accusation that we were conducting carpet bombing, of course, is absolutely false. For that matter, had we conducted carpet bombing, I think that there wouldn't be a Hanoi today.

NARRATOR: On December 22, American bombs hit Hanoi's Bach Mai hospital for a second time. Their target may have been a small airfield nearby.

DR. NGUYEN LUAN: Cries and moans filled the dark night. We had to use knives, hammers and shovels to break through the concrete walls in order to get to the victims trapped inside. As a surgeon, I operate on people to save their lives. Now I was using my surgical knife not to save people but to cut apart the corpses in the bomb shelter so we could rescue those still alive.

NARRATOR: The President ordered a one-day bombing halt for Christmas Day. On December 26, the B-52s resumed their missions.

The massive new raids had personally been ordered by President Nixon. His main concern, he said, was not domestic and international criticism, but high B-52 losses. Some of the bombs hit a Hanoi residential district, Khan Thiem. The North Vietnamese believed that the raids were a deliberate act of terror.

NGUYEN THI DUC: The shelter collapsed on me. The next morning, I was taken to the hospital. Only later on did I learn that five members of my family had been killed: my mother, my sister, and her husband, my older brother, my younger brother.

PHUNG THI TIEM: The most heart-breaking sight was in Sonquan alley. A whole family of seven -- husband and wife and five children -- had been killed. The oldest child was 20 and the youngest two. The whole family was wiped out. It was extremely painful to see. The site of their house is still an empty lot. What an outrage! A family of seven completely wiped out.

NARRATOR: The 11-day Christmas bombings were compared to the atomic blast on Hiroshima in World War II. And the tonnage of bombs dropped on the Hanoi-Haiphong area was actually greater, but the targets were more dispersed. The deaths were far fewer. In Hanoi they totalled 1,318.

HENRY KISSINGER: Nixon was of the view that something shocking had to be done. That was not my view at the time, but I didn't disagree with it, and I went along with it and I think Nixon turned out to be right.

NGUYEN CO THACH: After the Christmas bombing, the first day that Le Duc Tho and Kissinger had met in Paris, after shaking hands, Kissinger had told Le Duc Tho that "I am very sorry. I could not prevent the decision of the President in bombing North Vietnam on Christmas day." So Le Duc Tho say that: "I know who are responsible. All you are responsible. And you are criminals."

HENRY KISSINGER: Publicly, he refused to shake hands with me, and in all the pictures that were taken, he never appeared with me. But inside the negotiating room, he moved at tremendous speed and with as much human warmth as he was capable of generating towards a representative of the capitalist system.

WILLIAM SULLIVAN: It was a very somber meeting. No jollity, no joking as usually went on, and whenever points were pressed and we seemed to be at a point of suggesting that our patience was running thin, they either made a concession there or moved rapidly onto something else and set that aside.

NARRATOR: On January 11, Kissinger cabled Nixon that the agreement was ready. The terms were almost identical to those laid down in October. Le Duc Tho and the North Vietnamese were prepared to sign. The agreement affirmed that South Vietnam was one country with two governments. There were to be moves toward reconciliation. Prisoners of war would be released. American troops would leave. Northern forces

could remain in the South.

President Nixon sent Alexander Haig and John Negroponte to Saigon with the news of America's decision.

JOHN NEGROPONTE: We made it quite clear that this time we really planned to go through with signing the agreement whether they intended to join us or not.

ANITA BRYANT (Singing at LBJ Burial, January, 1973): *"Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord..."*

NARRATOR: Lyndon Johnson, the president who had first sent U.S. combat troops to Vietnam eight years earlier, died the day before the agreement was signed.

ANITA BRYANT: *"...coming of the Lord...he is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored...He hath loosed the faithful lightning of his terrible swift sword..."*

NARRATOR: Fifty-eight thousand American troops had died in Vietnam.

ANITA BRYANT: *"...His truth is marching on..."*

NARRATOR: On January 27, 1973, all parties signed the peace agreement. Hanoi celebrated with fireworks. It was also Tet -- the Vietnamese New Year. But to the North Vietnamese and Vietcong, the struggle had not ended. Vietnam was still divided.

PHAM VAN DONG, January 1973: *Le combat...The war we have fought for so many years continues. It is the same war for peace, and at the same time for independence, freedom and the peaceful unification of our native land.*

NARRATOR: Nearly 600 American airmen had been taken prisoner during the course of the war. Many had been held in what they called the "Hanoi Hilton." Now they were going home. The Vietnamese photographed their departure. They called the film, "Goodbye Uninvited Guests."

North Vietnamese prisoners were also being released. As they crossed the river that divided Vietnam, they discarded the clothing issued to them by the South Vietnamese government they had fought -- a government whose future was still in doubt.

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